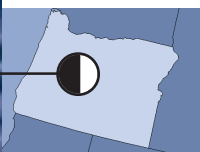


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Stories Teach River Conservation Ethic



Concerned about litter and inappropriate use of the McKenzie River, several Oregon groups joined to change people's behavior and build a conservation ethic -- through interpretive signs.

Trash on the River

Bob Keefer was struck by the contrasts. The shoreline of the McKenzie River, which holds some of the cleanest water in the country, was littered with toilet paper and sanitation problems. And the river itself, which peacefully flows through bucolic western Oregon, was plagued with congestion at boat landings and water fights between boaters.

Keefer, parks manager of Lane County, faced people's misuse of the McKenzie River everyday. In 1993, hoping to find a solution, Lane County helped form the McKenzie River Cooperative Management Partnership, a coalition of government agencies and private groups to manage 90 miles of the river, which flows west from the Cascade Range to the Willamette Valley and the cities of Eugene and Springfield.

While Keefer understood park operations, he wasn't sure how to change people's behavior on -- and perception of -- the river. Inspired by a McKenzie Watershed Council study which recommended developing a conservation ethic in the river's visitors through installation of interpretive signs, Keefer and the Partnership sought help from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (Rivers & Trails) program of the National Park Service to develop an interpretive sign plan.

Developing an Interpretation Plan

Rivers & Trails helped the Partnership develop the *McKenzie River Information & Interpretive Sign Plan*, which called for interpretive kiosks to be built at eight of the river's most heavily visited access points. Not only would the kiosks identify trailheads and public access points to the river, they also would provide information about environmental ethics, boating safety and land ownership. Rivers & Trails helped the Partnership develop interpretive themes and information for the kiosks, facilitated a public outreach workshop, provided training in interpretation and helped secure a grant for construction.

Changed Behavior

Two kiosks and six displays were installed during 1999 and 2000, and fourteen more are planned to be placed in the next few years. Substantial measurements of the change in the way people treat the river -- and each other -- will only be known after Keefer and the Partnership complete field surveys in 2001, but the attention that visitors and residents so far have given to the information on the kiosks and signs demonstrate curiosity -- and a desire to understand and preserve the beautiful McKenzie.

For More Information

Contact Alex Stone or Bryan Bowden of the National Park Service's Rivers & Trails program at (206) 220-4108 or alex_stone@nps.gov or (206) 220-4118 or bryan_bowden@nps.gov.

Keys to Success

- **Collaboration** between McKenzie River Cooperative River Maintenance Partnership and McKenzie Watershed Council.
- Willingness of Partnership to **set aside need for individual agency recognition** in developing interpretive kiosks.
- **Grant** from National Park Service Challenge Cost Share program for construction of interpretive kiosks.
- National Park Service **interpretation training** given to a Lane County employee.



interpretation plan -- an educational plan that reveals meanings and relationships about a subject through drawings, experiences, and objects and not just facts.

community participation

Association of Northwest Steelheaders
Bureau of Land Management
City of Eugene
Eugene Water & Electric Board
Lane County Parks Division
Lane County Public Works
McKenzie River Cooperative
Maintenance Partnership
McKenzie River Guides Association
McKenzie Watershed Council
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
Oregon Parks and Recreation
Department
U.S. Forest Service

Changing Perceptions of the River



"The public workshop we held with the help of Rivers & Trails really stood out. Besides the input we received, it let the community know we really welcomed their participation in developing the interpretive plan."

Bob Keefer, Parks Manager
Lane County Public Works

McKenzie Watershed Council identified the need for interpretive signs.

Lane County and the Partnership seeks help from the National Park Service to develop an interpretive sign plan.

Two interpretive kiosks and six information displays installed at heavily used river access sites and trailheads.



What the Future Holds for the McKenzie River

With its first signs in place, the Partnership is eager to measure their effectiveness. Starting in 2001, field surveys of visitors, residents, recreation providers, and law enforcement officials will gauge how the signs have changed people's perceptions and behaviors toward the river and will guide the development of the remaining 14 signs. Also, the agencies in the Partnership will exchange recreation lands to make land management and maintenance more efficient and cost-effective.

1993

McKenzie River Watershed Council established to foster better stewardship of the McKenzie River.

1994

1997

Sign plan written and National Park Service secures grant for construction.

1998

2000

Help From the National Park Service

Developing interpretive themes. Facilitating public workshops. Training in interpretive writing. Writing interpretive plans. In these ways over the course of a year, the National Park Service contributed to the McKenzie River Cooperative Maintenance Partnership's three-year-long effort to build a conservation ethic for the McKenzie River. This is one example of how the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program works -- it provides short-term staff assistance to local groups to help them solve the problems they face when protecting their community's important resources. If you think the National Park Service could help your group, contact Michael Linde, Program Leader, Rivers & Trails, 909 First Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104 or (206) 220-4113 or visit www.ncrc.nps.gov/rtca.